



# **SIERRA LEONE COUNTRY REPORT**

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**Country Information & Policy Unit**

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**HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM**

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## **Scope of the document**

**1.1** This Country Report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by Home Office officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It is not a detailed or comprehensive survey.

**1.2** The Report is compiled from a wide range of recognised sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to original source material, which has been made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report aims to provide only a brief summary of the source material quoted. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

**1.3** The information contained in this Country Report is, by its nature, limited to information that we have been able to identify from various well-recognised sources. The contents of this Report are not exhaustive and the absence of information under any particular heading does not imply that any analysis or judgement has been exercised to exclude that information, but simply that relevant information on the subject has not been identified from the sources that have been consulted. Equally, the information included in the Reports should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated.

**1.4** The great majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. Copies of other source documents, such as those provided by government offices, may be provided upon request.

**1.5** All sources have been checked for currency, and as far as can be ascertained, contain information, which remained relevant at the time, this Report was issued. Some source documents have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents.

**1.6** This Country Report and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in this Report are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the report is also included. Paper copies of the source documents have been distributed to nominated officers within IND.

**1.7** It is intended to revise this Report on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom. Information contained in Country Reports is inevitably overtaken by events that occur between the 6 monthly publications. Caseworkers are informed of such changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins.

## 2. Geography

**2.1** The Republic of Sierra Leone covers an area of 71,740 sq km (27,699 sq miles) and borders Guinea and Liberia. Sierra Leone is divided into four regions, three are the Northern, Eastern and Southern provinces. The other is the Western Area, the capital Freetown is in this region. There are two distinct seasons: from November to April is the dry season and from the May to October is the rainy season with the heaviest rains from July to September. Sierra Leone has a population of approximately 4.5 million. Extended family groups and the paramount Chieftancies dominate a substantial rural population. As a result of civil conflict, there has been a massive influx of the rural population to the towns. The official and commercial language of the country is English, while Krio (Creole) Mende, Limba and Temne are also spoken. [1a](p. 968)[2c](p.1)[3](p.1&2)[6](p.1-9) For further information on geography, refer to Europa Yearbooks, source [1a][1b].

## 3. Economics

**3.1** Sierra Leone is an extremely poor country with a market-based economy. Although the country is rich in natural resources and minerals (particularly diamonds, gold, rutile, and bauxite) and has large areas of fertile land suitable for farming. The economy is highly dependent on agriculture, and most people are employed in farming. [1a](p.974- 978) In 2003, inflation rate was 6.6%. [3](p.3) The unit of currency is the Leone (Le), and the average exchange rate, over 2002, was 2,099.03 Leones to the American Dollar. [1a](p.980)

**3.2** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that "The country had a market-based economy and remained extremely poor; per capita GDP [Gross Domestic Product] was \$170. Approximately two-thirds of the working population engaged in subsistence agriculture. Limited agricultural production resumed after a virtual standstill during the war, and industrial mineral companies began rehabilitating mining sites to resume extraction; illegal diamond mining continued. There was little manufacturing, and there were few exports; approximately 60 percent of the Government's budget came from foreign assistance. Years of fighting and decades of corruption and mismanagement resulted in a devastated infrastructure." [2a](p.1)

## 4. History

**4.1** Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 27 April 1961 with Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) remaining as Prime Minister. The SLPP retained power until March 1967 when the All People's Congress (APC) led by Dr. Siaka Stevens gained a majority. However the APC was prevented from taking power by a military coup until April 1968. In April 1971 Sierra Leone became a republic with Dr. Stevens as executive president. Following the deterioration of the economy and political unrest the country moved to a one party system in June 1978 and the APC became the sole legal party. There followed a series of Government financial scandals which resulted in demonstrations and

outbreaks of violence and on 28 November 1985 Major General Joseph Momoh, a cabinet minister in the APC and commander of the armed forces, became president. However, the new administration failed to improve the serious economic situation. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) a rebel group, linked to the Liberian regime, made its first incursions into Sierra Leone in 1991. On 29 April 1992 members of the armed forces seized power. Captain Valentine Strasser, who later established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), led them. Captain Strasser was deposed in a bloodless coup in 1996, and replaced by Captain Julius Maada Bio. Presidential and legislative elections that took place in 1996, and the SLPP formed the Government. [1b](p.3658-3660)

**4.2** On 25 May 1997, disaffected soldiers staged a military coup, and called on Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who was in prison on treason charges at the time, to be their leader. Koroma formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and in an effort to halt the war invited the RUF to join him. The military junta failed to attract international support and was shunned by the Sierra Leone people. The Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), aided by Kamajors, an auxiliary defence force loyal to President Kabbah, removed the military junta from Freetown in February 1998. President Kabbah, who had sought refuge in Guinea, returned to Freetown on 10 March 1998. Rebel groups, mainly from the AFRC and former members of the Sierra Leonean armed forces again attacked and occupied most of Freetown on 6 January 1999. ECOMOG forces eventually forced the rebels out of Freetown. During the rebel invasion and occupation, over 5,000 people were killed and most of the eastern suburbs of Freetown destroyed. Both the rebels and ECOMOG forces reportedly committed widespread human rights abuses. A cease-fire was agreed in May 1999. In July 1999, the Government of Sierra Leone and RUF signed a peace agreement, the Lomé Accord, in Lomé Togo. [1b](p. 3660-3662)[3](p.2-3) For further history, prior to 1961 refer to Europa Yearbooks, source [1a][1b].

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## **5. State Structures**

### **The Constitution**

**5.1** In September 1991 a new constitution came into force. [1b](p.3669) The United States State Department, in their Background Note on Sierra Leone, stated that "Sierra Leone is a republic with an executive president and a multi-party system of government. Civil rights and religious freedom are respected. A critical press continues to operate, although the government has intervened for alleged inaccurate reporting." [2c](p.4) The United States State Department, in their Country Report on Sierra Leone for 2003, generally supported this view. [2a](p.1-12)

## Citizenship

**5.2** The requirements for citizenship are set out in the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act 1973. Citizenship by birth would appear to be acquired by birth in Sierra Leone, with a father or grandfather being born in Sierra Leone. Citizenship by descent would appear to be acquired by a person born outside Sierra Leone, whose father was a Sierra Leonean citizen. Citizenship can also be acquired by descent through the maternal line, provided that the mother was a Sierra Leonean citizen, and that the child did not acquire any other nationality by birth in a foreign country. There are provisions to acquire citizenship by naturalisation. [15a](p.1-10)

**5.3** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “Only citizens can vote, and the Citizenship Act restricts the acquisition of citizenship at birth to persons of ‘patrilineal Negro-African descent.’ Since legal requirements for naturalization effectively denied citizenship to many long-term residents, a large number of persons of Lebanese ancestry, who were born and resided in the country, could not vote. A small percentage of the Lebanese population had been naturalized and did vote.” [2a](p.7)[15a](p.1-10)

## Political System

**5.4** Parliamentary and presidential elections were held on 14 May 2002. They were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere, but there were a few incidents of violence. [5d][5e] The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in May 2002; 11 political parties were represented in the elections. President Kabbah of the SLPP [Sierra Leone People’s Party] was re-elected with 70 percent of the popular vote. The RUFP [Revolutionary United Front Party] fielded presidential and parliamentary candidates, but won only 1.7 percent of the vote. In Parliament, the SLPP won 83 seats; only 2 other parties won seats. Only the SLPP was represented in the Cabinet after two cabinet members, who were earlier considered to be independent, joined the SLPP following the elections. Many international monitors declared the elections free and fair; however, there were credible reports of significant abuse of incumbency, uneven voter registration, manipulation of vote counting, and partisan action by the National Electoral Commission (NEC). There also were reports of voter coercion by party bosses and traditional leaders.” [2a](p.7)

**5.5** There were nine candidates in the presidential elections. The incumbent President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, SLPP, received 70.06% of the votes cast. Ernest Bai Koroma, All People’s Congress (APC) received 22.35% of the votes cast. Former military ruler John Paul Koroma also stood for the presidency, as the candidate for the Peace and Liberation Party (PLP), he came third, with 3% of the votes cast. [1a](p.983)

**5.6** The Sierra Leonean Parliamentary elections were held on 14 May 2002. The Parliament is formed of 124 members, with Paramount Chiefs being appointed to 12 seats. The two other parties that won seats in the parliamentary elections were the APC that obtained 27 seats, and the PLP

that obtained 2 seats. The RUFP, which is the political party into which the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was transformed, fielded both a presidential candidate, and parliamentary candidates. Their presidential candidate, Pallo Bangura, received 1.7% of the votes cast, and in the parliamentary elections the RUFP did not win a single seat. [1a](p.983-984)[7e](p.3)

## **Judiciary**

**5.7** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “The judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, appeals courts, the High Court, whose justices are chosen by the President, and magistrate courts. Local courts administered traditional law with lay judges; appeals from these lower courts moved to the superior courts.” [1b](p.3671)[2a](p.4)

**5.8** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The Constitution and the law provide for a speedy trial; however, in practice, the lack of judicial officers and facilities often produced long delays in the judicial process. Trials were usually fair; however, there was evidence that corruption influenced some cases. A majority of cases on the magistrate level were prosecuted by police officers, many of whom had little or no formal legal training.” [2a](p.4)

**5.9** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “The TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], a hybrid U.N.-Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal established in 2002 to provide a forum for publicly airing the grievances of victims and the confessions of perpetrators from the civil war, held hearings from April through August; approximately 500 persons appeared before the Commission. The testimony of victims dominated the hearings; however, the testimony of perpetrators, who initially were reluctant to appear, increased toward the conclusion of the hearings. Public attendance at many of the hearings was low; however, proceedings were broadcast on radio and television. The TRC also conducted thematic hearings on good governance, corruption, the role of civil society, and the rights of women.” [2a](p.8)

**5.10** However, according to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Traditional justice systems continued to extensively supplement the central government judiciary in cases involving family law, inheritance, and land tenure, especially in rural areas. Unlike in the previous year [2002], there were no reports that former CDF [Civil Defence Forces] and Movement of Concerned Kono Youth held informal courts in Kono District to settle disputes among area residents.” [2a](p.4)

## **The Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL)**

**5.11** The United States State Department in their Background Note: Sierra Leone stated that “The Lome Accord called for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations during the conflict to tell their stories and facilitate genuine reconciliation. Subsequently, the Sierra Leonean

government asked the UN [United Nations] for help to establish to help set up [sic] a Special Court for Sierra Leone, which would try those who 'bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law [committed] within the territory of Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996.' Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court began operating in the summer of 2002." [2c](p.4)[14a](p.2)

**5.12** The Special Court has begun pre-trial hearings, and has issued a number of indictments in connection with war crimes and human rights abuses. The accused, are from both ex-rebel groups and groups that acted in support of the Government. [5c][5h](p.1-3)[7g](p.1-2)

**5.13** As of the end of 2003, the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that the Special Court has issued indictments against the following "Former RUF leader Foday Sankoh; Sam 'Maskita' Bockarie, Sankoh's deputy; RUF commander Morris Kallon; AFRC commander Akex Tamba Brima ; RUF and AFRC/RUF commander Issa Sesay; CDF leader Sam Hinga Norman; AFRC commander Brima Kamara (AKA Buzzy); AFRC leader Santigie Kanu (AKA Five-Five); AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma (AKA JPK); RUF commander Augustine Gbao; Kamajor leader Allieu Kondewa; Kamajor leader Moinina Fofana; and former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Four of the 13 were not in custody at year's end [2003]: Sankoh, who died in July [2003] from a pulmonary embolism while in custody; Bockarie, who was killed during the year [2003] in Liberia; Charles Taylor, who was exiled to Nigeria during the year [2003]; and Koroma, who escaped from police custody in January [2003] and has not been seen since. All those indicted were charged with crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Specific charges included murder, rape, extermination, acts of terror, sexual slavery, conscription of children into an armed force, attacks on U.N. peacekeepers, and looting and burning of homes from 1997 to 1999. Initial appellate arguments were heard in November [2003], and the first trials were expected to begin in early 2004." [2a](p.7)

**5.14** The Sierra Leonean authorities had already arrested Foday Sankoh, for his suspected involvement in the killing of demonstrators that had occurred outside of his Freetown home in May 2000. [1b](p.3663)[7d](p.1-3) In July 2003, it was announced that Foday Sankoh had died in custody, he had been ill for some time. His poor health had resulted in him been unfit to stand trial. [5i](p.1-2)

**5.15** Sam Bockarie was reported to have been killed during fighting in Liberia in May 2003, and a body alleged to be his was returned to Freetown in June 2003. [7h] On 4 June 2003, the Special Court issued an indictment against Charles Taylor, the then President of Liberia, for crimes against humanity, resulting from his involvement in the civil conflict in Sierra Leone. [1a](p.974)



**5.16** Although many children were involved in human rights abuses, the Special Court will not seek to prosecute them. The Court has also sought to refute the belief that it will prosecute individuals, who were children, when these atrocities were perpetrated. [11d][16b](p.1-3)

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## **Legal Rights/Detention**

**5.17** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The law requires warrants for searches and arrests in most cases; however, arrest without warrant was common. There were adequate judicial protections against false charges; however, prisoners often were detained for prolonged periods on false charges. Detainees have the right of access to family or counsel; however, access to counsel was often delayed, and family visits were restricted at maximum-security Pademba Prison. There are provisions for bail, and there was a functioning bail system; however, international observers described frequent cases of excessive bail. Many criminal suspects were held for months before their cases were examined or formal charges were filed. Police often arrested persons at the request of individuals who claimed they were owed money by the arrestee. For example, in November [2003], police arrested without charge a foreign businessman, who was detained for 2 days at the request of a former business partner who was trying to extract money.” [2a](p.3-4)

**5.18** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “The 31 members of the West Side Boys, who were charged in 2002 with 11 counts of murder in connection with incidents in 1999 and 2000, remained in detention awaiting trial at Pademba Road Prison at year's end [2003]. International human rights groups criticized their continued detention without trial; however, local human rights groups did not actively advocate on behalf of the West Side Boys because of a reported aversion to their activities.” [2a](p.4)

**5.19** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “At year's end [2003], more than 60 RUF/AFRC members remained in Pademba prison awaiting trial, including: 47 RUF prisoners, who were arrested in 2000 and indicted in 2002 on 70 counts of murder and related charges; and 20 RUF/AFRC prisoners arrested in 2000 who have not been indicted.” [2a](p.4)

**5.20** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated “There were frequent reports of prolonged pretrial detention, failure to follow arrest and detention procedures, and lack of legal assistance for prisoners. In August [2003], RUF detainees at Pademba Prison reported to international monitors that they had been incarcerated without trial since May 2000, that they had not appeared in court since January [2003], and that approximately 60 other former RUF members had not been permitted contact with family members or legal counsel.” [2a](p.4)

## **Death Penalty**

**5.21** Sierra Leone retains the death penalty. [12a](p.1) The last time that it was used was in October 1998, when 24 soldiers were executed for their part in the AFRC regime. These executions were carried out after a hearing in the High Court, but were widely criticised by human rights organisations. A number of civilians were also sentenced to death, but these sentences were later commuted. [7a](p.1-2)[7b](p.1-2)[18b](p.1-2)

## **Internal security**

**5.22** RUF was formed as an armed rebel group in 1991 led by Foday Sankoh. Fighting between the Government and the RUF continued over the next few years. Following the replacement of President Strasser by President Bio the RUF and Government delegations met in February 1996, but RUF's demands could not be accepted. RUF therefore abandoned a cease-fire and launched a series of attacks in various parts of the country killing large numbers of civilians. However, after the elections took place a further cease-fire was imposed in March 1996 whilst negotiations continued between the rebels and the civilian Government. Although agreement was reached on some issues, RUF did not respect the cease-fire, and resumed its attacks on Government forces and civilians. [1b](p.3658-3660)

**5.23** On 7 July 1999 President Kabbah and Foday Sankoh signed a peace agreement, the Lomé Accord. Under the Lomé agreement the RUF would be transformed into a political party and would join a broad-based Government of national unity. The party was to receive 4 ministerial and 4 deputy ministerial posts. Foday Sankoh was granted absolute and free pardon that also applied to all combatants for acts carried out prior to the accord. This pardon also applies to those currently outside the country. [3](p.2-3)[22a](p.1-29) However, following an upsurge in violence in April/May 2000, Foday Sankoh was detained. [1b](p.3663)

**5.24** The agreement provided for the disarmament and demobilisation of all ex-combatants and the facilitation of delivery of humanitarian assistance. The agreement also provides for the establishment of a quasi-judicial national Human Rights Commission. Human Rights education to be promoted throughout the various sectors of society, including schools, media, the police and the military and religious community. [22a](p.1-29)

**5.25** In January 2003, there was an attack on Wellington army barracks in Freetown, and the prominent politician Johnny Paul Koroma was linked to this raid. Johnny Paul Koroma, who remains at large, is being sought in connection with this attack, and to answer charges outstanding against him before the Special Court. [2c](p.4)[5h](p.1-3)

## **Police**

**5.26** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that "The SLP [Sierra Leone Police], which has primary responsibility for

maintaining internal order, received insufficient resources, lacked investigative or forensic capabilities, and was widely viewed as corrupt and incompetent. During the civil war, numerous officers were killed or fled their posts, which resulted in a reduction of the country's police force from approximately 9,500 officers to 7,000. Budget constraints have impeded recruitment efforts, as have the lack of basic educational skills of applicants, many of whom had no schooling during the civil war. In May 2002, the Government appointed Brima Acha Kamara as the first citizen to head the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in 5 years. During the year [2003], IGP Kamara continued efforts to bring the SLP, which numbered more than 8,100 officers year's end [2003], up to pre-war levels." [2a](p.3) The international community is assisting in the training of the police force, and providing advice where appropriate. [16g](p.2-3)

**5.27** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "During the year [2003], there were frequent reports that police officers took bribes at checkpoints and falsely charged motorists with violations, and impounded vehicles to extort money." [2a](p.3)

### **Armed Forces**

**5.28** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that "Among the Government's security forces, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) officially has primary responsibility for internal order; however, on occasion, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and UNAMSIL share responsibility with the police in security matters. The RSLAF is responsible for external security. Civilian authorities maintained control of security forces throughout the year [2003]. Some members of the security forces committed human rights abuses." [2a](p.1) A British led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) is assisting in making the RSLAF a more proficient and professional force. [13b](p.2)[16g](p.3-4)

### **Border security and relations with neighbouring countries**

**5.29** The Mano River Union (MRU) was formed in 1973 to establish a customs and economic union between its member states, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Subsequently, the members signed a mutual non-aggression pact, and pledged to establish a permanent mechanism for conflict prevention. However, relations between the three countries have not always been peaceful, and the MRU has failed to live up to its original ideals. [3](p.4-5)

**5.30** In 1991, RUF leader Foday Sankoh launched an attack on Sierra Leone from Liberia, which started the civil conflict within Sierra Leone. In order to break the link between ex-Liberian President Taylor and the RUF, and so bring stability to Sierra Leone and the region, the UN introduced sanctions against Liberia in March 2001. These include an arms embargo, travel ban on designated senior political and military figures, and a ban on the export of rough diamonds. [3](p.4-5)

**5.31** There is also an ongoing dispute between Sierra Leone and Guinea about the border demarcation around Yenga. [3](p.4-5) The United States State

Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “There was no action taken against Guinean armed forces who participated in numerous killings in 2001. Guinean soldiers continued to occupy disputed land in Yenga, Kailahun District.” [2a](p.2)

**5.32** Unrest in Liberia has led to heightened tension on the common border in early 2003. Units of the Sierra Leone Army have been deployed to the region to deter any incursions by rebel forces from that country. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a military and civilian force working to bring stability to the country has assisted in this deployment. [7f][11c] The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report of February 2004, stated that incursions by Liberian fighters had ceased since the deployment of a United Nations mission to that country. [14c](p.5)

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## **Prisons and Prison condition**

**5.33** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “Prison conditions improved in some locations during the year [2003]; however, conditions in other facilities were poor. International human rights observers who visited maximum-security Pademba Road Prison reported that prisoners had adequate access to food, medical care, recreation, and vocational skills training. However, in May [2003], human rights observers visited prisons and police detention facilities in the Western Area, Kono, Bombali, Kambia, Port Loko, and Kenema District and reported that conditions frequently fell below minimum international standards because of overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, and insufficient medical attention. Such conditions resulted in numerous deaths during the year [2003]. Many problems resulted from the poor state of the judiciary; for instance, case backlogs in the courts led to severe overcrowding. Pademba Prison, which was designed to house 325 prisoners, held more than 800 prisoners. Conditions in holding cells in police stations were extremely poor, especially in small stations outside of Freetown. Government policy precluded family visits to prisoners at Pademba Prison except in exceptional circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. During the year [2003], international monitors visited the SCSL detention facilities on Bonthe Island and the new facility in Freetown; conditions reportedly met acceptable standards. In August, all SCSL detainees were transferred to the Freetown facility.” [2a](p.3)

**5.34** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “Male and female prisoners were housed separately. Adults and juveniles were incarcerated together. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners. International monitors, including UNAMSIL and the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), had unrestricted access to visit Pademba Prison and other detention facilities, including the SCSL detention facilities. At least one local human rights group claimed that it could not get unrestricted access to the prisons, although another local human rights group, Prison Watch, reported on detention facilities throughout the country.” [2a](p.3)

**5.35** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “International observers who visited Liberian combatants throughout the year [2003] at Mape and Mafanta Internment Camps reported that conditions were adequate; however, a number of juveniles were held with adults. Approximately 450 former Liberian combatants were detained at the 2 camps at year's end [2003].” [2a](p.3) The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in their report of February 2004 acknowledged that conditions in Mape had improved, but stated that access to adequate health care remained a problem. [14c](p.5)

## **Military Service**

**5.36** There is no conscription in Sierra Leone. However, both rebel, and groups backing the Government, forcibly recruited people into their ranks during the civil war. Large numbers of children were also forcibly recruited during the civil war. As these groups have disarmed, this has now ceased. [3](p.3&5-6)[8]

## **Medical Services**

**5.37** While the provision of basic health care has improved with the end of the civil conflict, it still remains inadequate in places. The health care infrastructure has yet to fully recover, and there is a lack of personnel, supplies, and equipment in some areas. [16g](p.9) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian groups provide care, but this is insufficient to meet all demands. Life expectancy is approximately 35 years. Sierra Leone's child and maternal mortality rates of 182 per 1,000 live births and 1,800 per 100,000 live births respectively are among the highest in the world. [3](p.6)[17a](p.1-3)

**5.38** Whilst the HIV-AIDS epidemic in Sierra Leone is not as pronounced as in other Sub-Saharan African countries, the rates of infection is increasing. A Centre for Disease Control study from February 2003 showed infection rates in Freetown at 7%, and it was 4% in the rest of the country. This is close to the 5% rate at which the infection spreads exponentially. The United Nation's Human Development Index Report 2003 cites infection rates among adults at 7%. This represents about 116,000 people. [3](p.6) Some funding has been put aside to monitor AIDS/HIV, and help the Government to develop an AIDS/HIV policy. [19a][19c] A HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaign is expanding within Sierra Leone. [16g](p.9)

**5.39** The World Bank has made funds available to assist in the improvement of health care, but this has yet to make a significant difference to conditions within the country. [19a][19b]

## **People with disabilities**

**5.40** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “There was no outright discrimination against persons with disabilities in housing or education; however, given the high rate of general unemployment, work opportunities for persons with disabilities were few. Public facility access

and discrimination against persons with disabilities were not considered public policy priorities. Although a few private agencies and organizations attempted to train persons with disabilities in useful work, there was no government policy or program directed particularly at persons with disabilities. No law mandates accessibility to buildings or provides assistance to persons with disabilities.” [2a](p.9)

**5.41** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “Some of the numerous individuals maimed in the fighting, or who had their limbs amputated by rebel forces, received special assistance from various local and international humanitarian organizations. Such programs involved reconstructive surgery, prostheses, and vocational training to help them acquire new work skills; however, amputees complained that they did not receive sufficient assistance compared to ex-combatants, who received assistance through the demobilization process. Attention to amputees increased the access of other persons with disabilities to health care and treatment.” [2a](p.9-10)

## **Educational System**

**5.42** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The law requires school attendance through primary school; however, only 42 percent of school-aged children were enrolled in school, according to UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund]. Schools, clinics, and hospitals throughout the country were looted and destroyed during the 11-year insurgency; most were not rebuilt by year’s end [2003]. A large number of children received little or no formal education. Schools were financed largely by formal and informal fees, but many families could not afford to pay them. The average educational level for girls was markedly below that of boys, and only 6 percent of women were literate. At the university level, male students predominated.” [2a](p.9)[5g]

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## **6. Human Rights**

### **6.A Human Rights Issues**

#### **General**

**6.1** The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office in their country profile of February 2004 stated that “Terrible human rights abuses were committed by all sides during the war. The RUF deliberately targeted civilians and resorted to brutal terror tactics. At least 50,000 people died. A third of the population was internally displaced or fled to refugee camps outside Sierra Leone. Some 30,000 civilians were deliberately maimed through amputation of limbs and other physical atrocities. Thousands of children were forcibly recruited to fight during the war. The conflict saw widespread rape, looting and destruction of property.” [3](p.4-5)

**6.2** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 gave a brief overview of the present situation as follows “The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in several areas. RSLAF soldiers beat to death a civilian. Security forces raped women and children; UNAMSIL forces also raped women and children. Although conditions in some prisons improved, many detention centers were overcrowded and unsanitary. Members of the SLP continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily. There were reports of extortion by police. Prolonged detention, excessive bail, and insufficient legal representation remained problems. The Government at times limited freedom of speech and the press during the year [2003]. Violence in Liberia, which produced an influx of more than 11,000 Liberian refugees during the year [2003], contributed to instability in border areas. Violence, discrimination against women, and prostitution remained problems. Female genital mutilation (FGM) remained widespread. Abuse of children was a problem; however, numerous children who fought as child soldiers continued to be released and participated in reintegration programs during the year [2003]. Residents of non-African descent faced institutionalized political restrictions. Forced labor continued to be a problem in rural areas. Child labor remained a problem. There were reports of trafficking in persons.” [2a](p.1)

## **Freedom of Speech and the Media**

**6.3** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the Government at times limited these rights in practice.” [2a](p.5)

**6.4** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “More than 50 newspapers were published in Freetown during the year [2003], covering a wide spectrum of interests and editorial opinion. Most of the newspapers were independent, and several were associated with opposition political parties. Reporting was often politicized and inaccurate, in large part because of poor training of journalists, insufficient resources, and a lack of commitment to objectivity. Corruption among journalists was widespread. The number of newspapers fluctuated weekly. Newspapers openly and routinely criticized the Government and its officials, as well [sic] opposition parties and former rebel forces.” [2a](p.5)

**6.5** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated “The Independent Media Commission (IMC) regulated independent media outlets. Although it was an independent body, some media observers alleged that the Government influenced it. In 2002, the IMC instituted a \$2,000 (4 million Leones) annual license fee for single channel radio stations. Radio journalists and media monitors claimed that this fee was prohibitively expensive and would limit severely the number of independent radio stations. The IMC threatened to close any radio station that did not pay the fee; however, by year's end [2003], no stations had been closed. Unlike in the previous year [2002], the IMC did not order newspapers to cease publication.” [2a](p.5)  
Reporters Without Borders reported that the West Africa Democracy Radio

(WADR) was refused a licence in 2002. The reason given for the ban, was because of security concerns. [20a](p. 2)

**6.6** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “Due to low levels of literacy and the relatively high cost of newspapers and television, radio remained the most important medium of public information. Several government and private radio and television stations broadcast; both featured domestic news coverage and political commentary.” [2a](p.5)

**6.7** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated “The Government did not restrict access to the Internet; however, the parastatal Sierratel communications company exercised a monopoly over land-line access to the Internet. A private company offered satellite-based Internet service; however, the cost precluded broad usage. The lack of competition and the poor condition of telephone lines often made Internet connectivity problematic.” [2a](p.5)

## **Journalists**

**6.8** According to the Reporters Without Borders report on Sierra Leone – 2003, “The Freetown high court on 12 November [2002] found Paul Kamara, editor of the privately-owned daily ‘For Di People’, guilty of libelling an appeal court judge, sentenced him to nine months in prison and a fine of 4.5 million leones (2,100 euros) and banned the newspaper from appearing for six months. Judge Methland Tholla Thomson had filed suit on 5 April [2002] following several articles calling him a thief, criminal and constitutional swindler, and the publication of his photo with the caption : ‘This man is dangerous.’” [20a](p.2) In March 2003, Sierra Leone Web reported his release, and his intention to appeal to have his conviction overturned. [22c](p.18-19) The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “On October 9 [2003] Paul Kamara, editor of the ‘For Di People’ newspaper, was found guilty of civil libel and fined \$25,000 (60 million Leones) for publishing an article that accused a High Court judge of corruption. Media groups charged that the action was an attempt to stop Kamara from publishing; the fine reportedly would require Kamara to divest himself of his press assets. On October 11 [2003], authorities arrested Kamara and two other employees of the newspaper on three counts of seditious libel against President Kabbah; the three were released on October 23 [2003]. International media groups continued to call for the repeal of the criminal libel law under which Kamara was charged.” [2a](p.5)

**6.9** The Reporters Without Borders report on Sierra Leone – 2003, stated that “During the week of 11 March 2002, the IMC shut down the privately-owned daily ‘African Champion’ Newspaper for two months and banned its managing editor, Mohamed D. Koroma, from working as a journalist for the same period because of a report accusing President Kabbah's son of corruption and claiming that he was protected by his father.” A further ban was imposed on the newspaper, and also on Mohammed Koroma, in August 2002, but these were rescinded in September 2002. [20a](p. 2) The United States State



Department Country Report for 2003 added that “By year's end [2003], the 2002 IMC case against Mohamed Koroma had not been heard by the High Court.” [2a](p.5)

**6.10** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “There was no action taken against police forces that detained the editor of the Democrat newspaper in 2001. There was no further development on the rumors of ‘killing squads’ that allegedly targeted a list of seven journalists in 2001.” [2a](p.5) While journalists are generally permitted to report with few restrictions, Reporters Without Borders has reported that the Sierra Leonean authorities continue to take action against editors, journalists and publications. [20a](p.1-3)[20b]

## **Freedom of Religion**

**6.11** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 noted that “The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. The Government has no requirements for recognizing, registering, or regulating religious groups. The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether to attend Muslim- or Christian-oriented classes.” [2b](p.1)

**6.12** According to the United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 “The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom, and interfaith marriage is common. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC), composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, plays a vital role in civil society and actively participates in efforts to further the peace process in the country and the sub-region. The IRC criticized the use of force and atrocities committed by the rebels, endorsed reconciliation and peace talks, and facilitated rehabilitation of the victims affected by the war, including former child soldiers.” [2b](p.2)

## **Religious groups**

**6.13** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated that “Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available; however, most sources estimate that the population is 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian, and 10 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. There is no information concerning the number of atheists in the country.” [2b](p.1)

**6.14** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated that “Many syncretistic practices reportedly exist, with up to 20 percent of the population practicing a mixture of Islam and traditional indigenous religions or Christianity and traditional indigenous religions.” [2b](p.1)

**6.15** The United States State Department Religious Freedom Report 2003 noted that “Historically most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern

areas of the country, and Christians were located in the south; however, the 11-year civil war, which officially was declared over in January 2002, resulted in movement by major segments of the population.” [2b](p.1)

## **Freedom of Assembly & Association**

**6.16** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.” [2a](p.6) The report added “Several large demonstrations took place during the year [2003], including opposition party political rallies. Although some demonstrations were marred by violence, most were relatively peaceful. At times UNAMSIL forces backed up government security forces in dealing with demonstrations.” [2a](p.6)

**6.17** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted “The Constitution provides for freedom of association, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There were numerous civic, philanthropic, and social organizations, and the registration system was routine and nonpolitical. No known restrictions were applied to the formation or organization of the 16 opposition political parties and the more than 60 registered civic action NGOs. Throughout the year [2003], the RUF, the political party formed from the RUF, continued to exist, although it had serious problems with membership and organization.” [2a](p.6)

## **Employment Rights**

**6.18** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that “The Constitution provides for the right of association, and in practice, workers had the right to join independent trade unions of their choice. Police and members of the armed services were prohibited from joining unions. Approximately 60 percent of the workers in the formal sector in urban areas, including government workers, were unionized, but attempts to organize agricultural workers and mineworkers have met with little success. All labor unions generally joined the Sierra Leone Labor Congress (SLLC), but membership was voluntary. There were no reliable statistics on union membership.” [2a](p.10)

**6.19** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “The Trade Union Act provides that any five persons may form a trade union by applying to the registrar of trade unions, who has statutory powers under the act to approve the creation of trade unions. The registrar may reject applications for several reasons, including an insufficient number of members, proposed representation in an industry already served by an existing union, or incomplete documentation. If the registrar rejects an application, the decision may be appealed in the ordinary courts, but applicants seldom took such action.” [2a](p.10)

**6.20** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that while “The law does not prohibit anti-union discrimination against workers or employer interference in the establishment of unions; however, there were no

reports of such cases during the year [2003]. An employee fired for union activities could file a complaint with a labor tribunal and seek reinstatement. Complaints of discrimination against trade unions were made to a tribunal.” [2a](p.10)

**6.21** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “The Regulation of Wages and Industrial Relations Act provides the legal framework for collective bargaining. Collective bargaining must take place in trade group negotiating councils, each of which had an equal number of employer and worker representatives. Most enterprises were covered by collective bargaining agreements on wages and working conditions. The SLLC provided assistance to unions in preparations for negotiations; in the case of a deadlock, the Government could intervene. Although most cases involving industrial issues continued to go through the normal court system, the Industrial Court for Settlement of Industrial Disputes heard more than 20 cases during the year [2003].” [2a](p.10)

**6.22** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 “Workers had the right to strike, although the Government could require 21 days' notice. There were several significant strikes in the public sector during the year [2003]. Teachers and doctors went on strike over wages and unpaid salaries in the form of work stoppages and sick-outs. Dock workers went on strike after authorities briefly detained the president of the Dock Workers Union in connection with an October 3 [2003] attack on the Chairman of the Board of the Ports Authority.” [2a](p.10) The report added that while “No law prohibits retaliation against strikers, even for a lawful strike; however, the Government did not take adverse action against the employees and paid some of them back wages.” [2a](p.10)

## **People Trafficking**

**6.23** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there were reports that persons were trafficked from and within the country. Child prostitution was a problem.” [2a](p.10) The report also noted that “With the end of the war and the demobilization of child soldiers, trafficking in persons lessened significantly. The Government acknowledged unconfirmed reports of limited trafficking within and from the country; however, it lacked resources to address the problem adequately. There were no figures available on the extent of the trafficking problem. Children reportedly were trafficked to Liberia as forced conscripts and to Europe in false adoption schemes.” [2a](p.10-11)

## **Freedom of Movement**

**6.24** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “The Constitution provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice; however, there were frequent reports that SLP officers manned roadblocks and stopped motorists to extort money from travelers.” [2a](p.6)

**6.25** However, The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “The Liberian border officially closed, at times, during the year [2003] due to the civil conflict in Liberia; however, authorities permitted refugees, returnees, and other persons to move between the two countries regularly. There were some unconfirmed reports of bribery or coercion at border crossing points. At year's end [2003] the border was open for all travel.” [2a](p.6-7) The closure of the border was in light of the upsurge of violence in Liberia in early 2003. As a response to security concerns, the Liberian border was closed in February 2003, but was re-opened in August 2003. [5j](p.1-2) United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report of February 2004, noted that incursions of fighters into Sierra Leone from that country, had stopped, following the deployment of a United Nations Mission to Liberia. [14c](p.5)

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## **6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups**

### **Ethnic Groups**

**6.26** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “The Constitution prohibits discrimination against women and provides for protection against discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity; however, residents of non-African descent, particularly the Lebanese community, faced institutionalized political restrictions on the acquisition of citizenship.” [2a](p.10)

**6.27** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “The ethnically diverse population consisted of at least 13 ethnic groups that all spoke distinct primary languages and were concentrated outside urban areas; however, all ethnic groups besides the Krio used Krio as a second language. Little ethnic segregation was apparent in urban areas, and interethnic marriage was common. The two largest ethnic groups were the Temne in the north and the Mende in the south. Each of these groups was estimated to make up approximately 30 percent of the population. There were reports of interethnic tension.” [2a](p.10)

**6.28.** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 took the view that “Ethnic loyalty remained an important factor in the Government, the armed forces, and business. Complaints of ethnic discrimination in government appointments, contracts, military commissions, and promotions were common.” [2a](p.10)

### **Women**

**6.29** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “Domestic violence against women, especially wife beating, was common. The police were unlikely to intervene in domestic disputes except in cases involving severe injury or death. In rural areas, polygyny was common. Women suspected of marital infidelity often were subjected to physical abuse. Frequently women were beaten until they divulged the names of their

partners. Because husbands could claim monetary indemnities from their wives' partners, the beatings often continued until the woman named several men even if there were no such relationships. There also were reports that women suspected of infidelity were required to undergo animistic rituals to prove their innocence." [2a](p.8)

**6.30** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "Rape was recognized as a societal problem and was punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment. There were reports that former rebel forces continued to force women and girls to act as sex slaves. There also were reports of the sexual abuse of refugees in refugee camps. Cases of rape were underreported, and indictments were rare, especially in rural areas. Medical or psychological services for rape victims were very limited. Rape victims were required to obtain a medical report to file charges; however, government doctors charged \$20 (50,000 Leones) for such an exam, which was prohibitively expensive for most victims. The International Rescue Committee opened centers in Freetown and Kenema to perform medical examinations and provide counseling for victims of sexual assault; human rights monitors also urged the Government to eliminate or lower the cost." [2a](p.8)

**6.31** A Human Rights Watch's report has highlighted the abuses during the civil conflict, and some of the Special Court indictments are against those suspected of involvement in crimes relating to rape and enslavement during this period. However, the report also noted that widespread social problems still remain regarding the treatment of women in Sierra Leone. [13a](p.3-4)

**6.32** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 stated that "The Constitution provides for equal rights for women; however, in practice, women faced both legal and societal discrimination. In particular, their rights and status under traditional law varied significantly depending upon the ethnic group to which they belonged. The northern Temne and Limba tribes gave greater rights to women to inherit property than did the southern Mende tribe, which gave preference to male heirs and unmarried daughters. In the Temne tribe, women could not become paramount chiefs; however, in the Mende tribe, there were several female paramount chiefs. Women did not have equal access to education, economic opportunities, health facilities, or social freedoms. In rural areas, women performed much of the subsistence farming and had little opportunity for formal education." [2a](p.9)

**6.33** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "Women were active in civic and philanthropic organizations. Domestic NGOs, such as 50/50 and Women's Forum, raised awareness of gender equality and women's issues and encouraged women to enter politics as candidates for Parliament." [2a](p.9) The report also noted that "There were 16 women in the 112-seat Parliament, 3 women in the Cabinet, and 1 in the Supreme Court. A significant number of women were employed as civil servants." [2a](p.7)

## Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

**6.34** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “FGM was practiced widely at all levels of society, although with varying frequency. The less severe form of excision was practiced. UNICEF and other groups estimated that 80 to 90 percent of women and girls had undergone the practice; however, local groups believed that this figure was overstated. FGM was practiced on girls as young as 5 years old. No law prohibits FGM. Although a number of NGOs worked to eradicate FGM and to inform the public about its harmful health effects, active resistance by women's secret societies, in which FGM commonly occurred as part of initiation rites, countered efforts against the practice.” [2a](p.8) The United States State Department in a Report on FGM in Sierra Leone noted that such groups see FGM as a rite of passage, and support the practise on cultural grounds. According to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, FGM is usually conducted at puberty during mass ceremonies in isolated rural locations. [2d](p1)[21b](p.1-3)[23]

**6.35** The best known of these societies would appear to be the Bondo society, but various interchangeable names appear to be used, the United States State Department in their Report on FGM in Sierra Leone noted that another common term is Sande. The report also noted that members of these groups were from all parts of society, and would appear to have considerable social and political influence. [2d](p.1)[21b](p.1-3)

**6.36** The Bondo society appears to be organised at both a local and a national level. The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board noted that the group's leaders are usually referred to as Soweis, and there are reports that suggest that this position is hereditary. [2d](p.1)[21b](p.1-3) As the Bondo is a secret society, reliable information regarding their organisation, leadership and ceremonies is limited. During the ceremony, where FGM is performed, the initiates are sworn to secrecy. [2d](p.1-2)[21b](p.1-3)

**6.37** The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report of February 2004, noted that there appears to be little political will or inclination to challenge FGM as it is traditionally practised within Sierra Leone. [14c](p.8) The local media have reported that some politicians would appear to support the Bondos, or at least be ambivalent in their attitude towards it. [23](p.1-3)[24] The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “By year's end [2003], the Director of Public Prosecutions had not decided whether to file charges against the 10 women arrested in 2002 in connection with the death of a 14-year-old girl following an FGM rite.” [2a](p.8)[22b](p.1)

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## Children

**6.38** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “From 1991 to 1999, the RUF abducted approximately 20,000 persons throughout the country; some victims escaped, and more than 10,000,

primarily children, were released and went through a formal reintegration process. However, former RUF rebels continued to hold some persons, including women and children, as laborers or sex slaves at year's end [2003]. Some women reportedly remained with their captors during the year [2003] due to a lack of viable options and intimidation by their captors. According to child protection officers from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the Government was severely hindered by a lack of resources and had taken little action to secure their release. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Children, and Gender maintained a database, with the help from UNICEF, which attempted to track children separated from their families during the war. International NGOs continued to work to secure the release of women and children from their captors, with government assistance on some occasions." [2a](p.2)

**6.39** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that "More than 7,000 child soldiers served alongside adults on both sides during the civil conflict. By 2002, when demobilization was completed, 6,845 child combatants had been demobilized since 1998, according to the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. Girls represented 8 percent of demobilized child soldiers and 30 percent of reunified noncombatant separated children. In previous years, UNAMSIL compelled the RUF to disarm, demobilize, and release its child soldiers; however, there were concerns that a significant number of children remained with their captors. Because U.N. and human rights observers estimated that girls represented 50 percent of those abducted during the war, and there were reports that the rebels released disproportionate numbers of boys, these groups feared that many girls continued to be held as sex slaves." [2a](p.9)

**6.40** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 also noted that "During the year [2003], more than 3,000 children from both groups participated in UNICEF's Community Education Investment Program (CEIP), which was designed to enable children separated from their families to return to school. CEIP provided each school that enrolled a child ex-combatant with learning, teaching, or recreational materials to assist 200 children for 1 year. Others were in special transitional centers, which were designed to help provide for their unique mental and emotional needs prior to reunification with their families. There continued to be reports that some families and communities rejected the returnees because of their perceived involvement in rebel atrocities. Child protection agencies reported that hundreds of boys and girls did not participate in the formal demobilization process. Locating the families of released child combatants often was difficult, and some did not want to assume responsibility for their children, some of whom were mentally and emotionally incapable of rejoining their families." [2a](p.9)

**6.41** UNICEF has requested additional money to assist with courses to reintegrate child soldiers, as they state that there is a shortfall in funds to address the need for rehabilitation. [11b](p.1-3). In spite of these difficulties, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report of September 2003, stated that of the 7,134 children registered with child protection agencies, 98% had been reunited with their families. This figure

would include former child combatants, and those who were separated from their families for other reasons. [14b](p.5)

**6.42** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labor by children; however, such practices continued to exist. There were reports of bonded labor by children in rural areas. There continued to be reports that former RUF commanders forced children to mine diamonds. The Government had not asserted complete control over the diamond fields by year’s end.” The report also stated that while “The official minimum age for employment is 18 years; however, children between the ages of 12 and 18 years may work in certain non-hazardous occupations, provided that they had parental consent. Due to a severe lack of resources, the Government was unable to implement these laws.” [2a](p.11)

**6.43** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that “Children routinely assisted in family businesses and worked as petty vendors. Adults employed a large number of street kids to sell, steal, and beg. In rural areas, children worked seasonally on family subsistence farms. Hundreds of children, including those 10-years-old and younger, mined in alluvial diamond fields for relatives. Because the adult unemployment rate remained high, few children were involved in the industrial sector or the formal economy.” [2a](p.11) The report also stated that “Foreign employers hired children to work as domestic laborers overseas at extremely low wages and in poor conditions. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation was responsible for reviewing overseas work applications to see that no one under the age of 14 was employed for this purpose; however, the reviews were ineffective.” [2a](p.11)

**6.44** In February 2002, there were reports by NGOs, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children UK, that workers in refugee camps in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have been sexually abusing children in their care. Peacekeepers within Sierra Leone have also been accused of such abuses. The UN has acted to investigate these allegations, but no action was taken as a result of these enquiries. [5b](p.1-3)[16e]

### **Child Care Arrangements**

**6.45** The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report of February 2004, noted that NGOs and international organisations were assisting in the provision of childcare. The Government’s provisions for childcare are limited, but this would appear to be due to a lack of resources, rather than from an unwillingness to address this problem. [14c](p6-8)[5f](p.1-3)

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## Homosexuals

**6.46** There is limited information on the attitude to homosexuality in Sierra Leone. The International Lesbian And Gay Association (ILGA) noted that under laws that pre-date independence, male homosexuality would appear to be illegal, but there is no information on how the law is applied. [9a](p.1-2)[10](p.1-4)

**6.47** Behind the Mask, a website that monitors Gay and Lesbian matter in Africa, stated that in August 2003 the Sierra Leone authorities registered Sierra Leone Lesbian And Gay Association (SLLAGA). However, this would not appear to have altered the legal status of male homosexuality. [9b] The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board noted that SLLAGA had been registered, but also that the limited available information would tend to indicate that there is a general disapproval of homosexuality, and this is sometimes reflected in the media. [21c]

## 6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

### Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

**6.48** ECOMOG withdrew the majority of its troops by April 2000. In late April/early May 2000, RUF forces appeared to be preparing to attack Freetown, their attitude to the peacekeepers and close proximity of their forces to the city, were interpreted as a threat. In a dispute regarding disarmament, RUF attacked UNAMSIL forces and took approximately 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. These were released in late May 2000, but a number were killed in this upsurge of violence. [1b](p.3663) On 8 May 2000, members of RUF fired on demonstrators outside Foday Sankoh's house in Freetown, and a number of people were killed. Foday Sankoh was suspected of involvement in this violence, he attempted to evade arrest, by going into hiding in Freetown, but was detained on 17 May 2000. [1b](p.3663)[2c](p.3) Following a change in RUF's leadership in August 2000, General Issa Sesay replaced Foday Sankoh as interim leader. [1b](p.3663)

**6.49** The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office in their country profile of February 2004, noted that in November 2000, the Sierra Leone Government and RUF signed the Abuja Agreement, a cease-fire agreement brokered by ECOWAS in Nigeria. The agreement agreed to an end of hostilities, the revival of the derailed peace process and to a process of disarmament. They also agreed that the UN Mission in Sierra Leone would be allowed to deploy freely into rebel-held areas, including the diamond producing regions. [3](p.3)[7c]

**6.50** Prior to the elections in May 2002, all militia and rebel groups were to disarm. The United Nations Secretary General in his report of March 2002, reported that this had been achieved in January 2002, with over 47,000 rebel and Government militia forces being disarmed. [16f](p.3)[11a](p.1-2) RUF has re-organised as a political party, and it contested the parliamentary elections, and fielded a presidential candidate. [1a](p.974)

## **Civil Defence Force (CDF)**

**6.51** The Civil Defence Forces (CDF), is a coalition of militias that supports the Government and is based on a traditional hunting society. They are also referred to as Kamajors. They were nominally under military discipline, and though independent were responsible to the Government. [1a](P.971&974)

**6.52** The United Nations Secretary General, in his report of March 2002, noted that by January 2002, over 47,000 members of rebel and Government forces were disarmed; this included members of the CDF. [16f](p.3)[11a](p.1-2) The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in a report in April 2003, noted that Sam Hinga Norman, former leader of the CDF, is to face charges at the Special Court. This has not been popular, as there is still widespread support for him within the country. [7g](p.1-2)

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## **Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

**6.53** According to the United States State Department Country Report for 2003 "Since April 2001, approximately 220,000 registered internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been resettled; many more were unregistered and returned to their homes without assistance. NGOs estimate that approximately 10,000 to 20,000 unregistered IDPs remained, mostly in urban areas. The last remaining IDP camps were closed in December 2002; however, two camps for war-wounded persons remained, one in Grafton, and another for amputees in Freetown." [2a](p.6)

**6.54** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that "Approximately 32,000 refugees were repatriated during the year [2003]. An estimated 40,000 persons remained in refugee camps in Guinea and Liberia; smaller numbers remained in Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, and other countries and were expected to integrate locally in those countries." [2a](p.6) In a radio interview in March 2004, the Foreign Minister Momodu Koroma stated that 90% of those who had fled during the civil conflict had now returned. [11f](p.1-2) The United States State Department's report added that "The large influx of IDPs and refugees and the lack of resources caused tension with local residents; however, there were no reported incidents of violence. There were numerous reports that refugees and IDPs returned to find their homes occupied." [2a](p.6)

**6.55** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 noted that while "The law does not provide for the granting of refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; however, in practice, the Government provided protection against refoulement and granted refugee status and asylum. The Government cooperated with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organizations in assisting refugees." [2a](p.6)

**6.56** The United States State Department Country Report for 2003 reported that “The Government also provided temporary protection to certain individuals who fall outside of the definition of the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. During the year [2003], the Government continued to provide temporary protection to an increasing number of Liberians who had fled the conflict in their home country. More than 67,000 Liberian refugees were living in the country by year's end [2003], according to the UNHCR. Some camps, at times, were unable to provide adequate food or shelter for the influx of refugees, which sometimes caused instability in border areas. In April [2003], the UNHCR opened its eighth refugee camp in the country near Tobanda village; the camp had a capacity for 10,000 persons.” [2a](p.6)

**6.57** The Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported that in 2003 and early 2004, there were violent clashes between Liberian refugees and the host communities in Sierra Leone. Many of these refugees are housed in camps, and the local communities who may either resent their presence, or in retaliation for perceived criminal activity, have attacked these camps. There is no indication that the authorities have supported this violence. [11e](p.1-2)

## **United Nations (UN)**

**6.58** On 5 July 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1306 (2000). This resolution imposed a ban on the import of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone, and it also requested that the Sierra Leone Government set up a system of certification. This certification would confirm the provenance of diamonds exports that were approved by the Sierra Leone Government. [16a](p.1-5)[16c](p.1-2) The Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), in October 2000, reported that the Sierra Leone Government lifted its ban on the export of diamonds, after taking delivery of specially printed certificates. [5a]

**6.59** While progress has been made on the control of the illicit diamond trade, it still remains a problem. In December 2002, the UN re-affirmed its commitment to ending the trade in illicit diamonds from Sierra Leone, and approved a resolution to retain the measures already taken to reduce it, which was referred to in UN Security Council Resolution 1446 (2002). [16d](p.1-2)

**6.60** In August 2000 the Security Council adopted Resolution 1315 (2000). This resolution recommended that the Sierra Leone Government assist in the creation of an independent Special Court with jurisdiction over cases relating to "notable crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law committed within the territory of Sierra Leone". The court would also have jurisdiction over individuals accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for the crimes listed above. [16b](p.1-3)

**6.61** The United Nations Secretary General, in his report of March 2002, noted that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) had been completed with over 47,000 fighters from various groups of rebels been

processed. [16f](p.3) The United Nations Secretary General, in his report of March 2004, noted that training, for those who have been demobilised, is being provided. [16g](p.5)

**6.62** In March 2004, The UN Security Council voted to extend the mandate of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone by six months, which was referred to in UN Security Council Resolution 1537 (2004). [16h](p.1-2) The United Nations Secretary General, in his report of March 2004, noted that the United Nations peacekeeping force was around 11,500, and is in the process of being reduced. [16g](p.2)

## **Poros Society**

**6.63** The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board noted that the Poros society is a traditional West African society, its membership is confined to men. The society transcends religious and ethnic divides, and its influence is spread over a number of West African countries. [18c][21a](p.1-3)

**6.64** The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board noted that the organisation of this society may differ from place to place, but they appear to have a number of features in common. These would include, an important role in traditional society, membership being confined to men only, selecting, or influencing the election of, tribal leader, and initiates boys into adulthood in secret ceremonies. These ceremonies may involve scarification. The society has considerable local and national influence, it would appear to be able to organise nation wide in Sierra Leone. In some areas the membership would appear to comprise all of the adult male population. Membership of the Poros society is essential in some communities for a man to take part in local affairs. The society prohibits the revelation of its ceremonies to non-members, but there is no information regarding what happens to those that break this rule, or transgress any of the other rules of the society. Poros would also appear to have the support of some political leaders. [18a](p1-2)[21a](p.1-3)

**6.65** As well as political influence, and being an informal means of enforcing social control, the society also attempts to regulate the way that natural resources are used. There have been reports in the local media that the society has abused its position and intimidate non-members, for example by attempting to force people to join the society, or provocative demonstrations. There is little information on what action the authorities would take against members of this society who break the law. [18c][18d](p.1-2)[18e](p.1-2)]

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## **ANNEX A: Chronology of Major Events**

**1961** 27 April Sierra Leone becomes an independent state within the Commonwealth led by Dr. Milton Margai of the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party).

**1962** SLPP retained power in elections.

**1964** Sir Milton Margai dies and is succeeded as Prime Minister by his half brother Dr. Albert Margai.

**1967** In March the All Peoples Congress (APC) led by Dr. Siaka Stevens wins the general election but is prevented from taking power by a military coup.

**1968** In April following an army mutiny a civilian government is restored with Dr. Stevens as Prime Minister.

**1971** In April Sierra Leone is declared a republic with Dr. Stevens as executive president.

**1976** Dr. Stevens re-elected to presidency for a second 5 year term of office in March.

**1977** Elections held in May a year early because of political unrest.

**1978** The new constitution was approved in June which provided for a one party system. APC thus became the sole legal party. On 14 June Stevens was sworn in for a 7-year presidential term. SLPP MPs joined the APC.

**1981 - 1985** Continuing unrest and demonstrations against food shortages, the rise in prices and failure to pay salaries.

**1985** Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh inaugurated as president.

**1987** In March the Government announced that it had suppressed an attempted coup.

**1989 October** Francis Minah, the first vice-president, and 5 others executed for plotting to assassinate Momoh and to overthrow government.

**1991** Revolutionary United Front (RUF) begins attacks in Sierra Leone in mid 1991. In September A new constitution was formally adopted. In late September 6 newly created political associations allied themselves as United Front of Political Movements (UNIFOM) and demanded that the government give way to an interim administration.

**1992 April 29** Government replaced in armed coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser. Momoh fled to Guinea on 30 April and Strasser announced the formation of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), which suspended the constitution; dissolved the House of Representatives; suspended all political activity and imposed a state of emergency and curfew.

**1992 May 6** Strasser was sworn in as head of state.

**1992 July** Legislation introduced which imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship.

**December** The government foiled a coup attempt by the Anti Corruption Revolutionary Movement. Nine of those who were accused of involvement in the conspiracy, together with 17 prisoners previously convicted of treason, were executed.

**1993 December** A five member Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established to organise the registration of voters and establish the demarcation of constituency boundaries. At the end of the month the state of emergency which had operated since April 1992 was ended.

**1995 June** The ban on political parties was formally rescinded. 15 parties were subsequently granted registration although the RUF refused to participate in the political process.

**1996 January** Strasser deposed by military officers led by Bio in a bloodless coup. Bio assumed the office of head of state.

**February 26** Presidential and legislative elections took place

**March 15** A second round of presidential elections took place.

**March 29** Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP inaugurated as president.

**July** Constitution of 1991 formally re-instated.

**November** Signing of the peace agreement in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Known as the Abidjan Accord it provided for the immediate cessation of hostilities and a schedule for disarmament, demobilisation and reconstruction. A Neutral Monitoring Group from the international community was to be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. There were, however, major setbacks and delays in implementation.

**1997 May 25** President Kabbah's government overthrown by a group of low ranking army officers who formed the AFRC. Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who was set free from prison on the day of the coup, headed the AFRC. The constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and all demonstrations were prohibited.

**June 17** Major Koroma was sworn in as head of state. The RUF joined forces with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) to form the People's Army. Foday Sankoh was named vice-chairman of the AFRC and prominent members of the RUF were appointed to the AFRC's ruling council.

**October 23** An agreement is signed in Conakry which, over a 6-month period, would provide inter alia for the re- instatement of Kabbah's civilian government and the disarmament of all combatants and immunity for the leaders of the May coup.

**1998 Mid February** ECOMOG troops liberated Freetown. Go on to secure most major towns and roads in the country.

**March 10** President Kabbah returns to country.

**July** RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh returned to Sierra Leone from Nigeria, where he had been detained since 1997.

**August** 16 civilians found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) Programme formally launched.

**October 19** 24 soldiers executed by firing squad

**October 23** Sankoh found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

**November 5** 15 civilians convicted of treason and sentenced to death.

**1999 January 6** Rebels enter parts of Freetown. In late January ECOMOG troops launch offensive, rebels forces retreat. ECOMOG re-takes all of Freetown.

**May 18** Cease-fire Agreement signed by Government of Sierra Leone and RUF

**July 7** Peace agreement signed in Lomé by Government of Sierra Leone and RUF.

**November** fighting between RUF and AFRC forces in Makeni and Lunsar.

**November 2** President Kabbah forms his new cabinet that incorporates members of the RUF.

**November** United Nations begin deploying peacekeeping troops.

**December** RUF guerrilla commander Sam Bockarie executes 8 senior aides and then flees his jungle stronghold.

**2000 January** ECOMOG begin to withdraw its troops from Sierra Leone

**May** ECOMOG complete withdrawal.

**May** RUF took 500 UN peacekeepers hostage, they have since been freed, but a number were killed. In the light of the deteriorating situation foreign nationals are evacuated. British forces were deploy to hold Lungi airport, assist in the evacuation of foreign nationals, and to provide non-combat support to the legitimate Sierra Leone authorities and the UN.

**May 8** Members of RUF, fired on demonstrators outside Foday Sankoh's house in Freetown. A number of people were killed, and Foday Sankoh is believed to have sanctioned this action. He attempted to evade arrest, by going into hiding in Freetown, but was arrested on 17 May.

**June 14** Britain began pulling out the last of its troops from Sierra Leone.

**July** The UN Security Council imposed an 18-month ban on the trade in uncertified rough diamonds from Sierra Leone in a bid to stop their sale from funding RUF.

**August** RUF 's Leader Foday Sankoh was replaced by Gen. Issa Sesay.

**November 11** The Lomé peace accord is revisited. A cease-fire agreement is signed between the government and RUF.

**2001 January** Government postpones presidential and parliamentary elections - set for February and March - for six months because of continuing insecurity, which it said made it impossible to conduct free and fair elections.

**March** UN troops for the first time begin to deploy in rebel-held territory.

**May** Disarmament of rebels begins, and British-trained Sierra Leone army starts deploying in rebel-held areas.

**2002 January** - Disarmament process completed. RUF officially established the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP).

**May** - Presidential elections held, President Kabbah re-elected. The Sierra Leonean Parliament elections were also held on 14 May 2002. The Parliament is to be formed of 124 members, with Paramount Chiefs being appointed to 12 seats. In the parliamentary elections, the SLPP obtained 83 seats, the APC 27seats, and the PLP 2 seats.

**2003 January** - There were indications that Johnny Paul Koroma was involved in an attack on Wellington army barracks in Freetown. Police and army units raid properties belonging to him.

**March** The Special Court has begun pre-trial hearings, and has indicted seven men in connection with human rights abuses. Those accused are both ex-rebels and Government supporters. The state of emergency laws, that had limited some of the Constitutions provisions, was lifted on 1 March 2002.

**May** Sam Bockarie, a prominent former leader of RUF, was killed during fighting in Liberia, and a body alleged to be his was reported to have been returned to Freetown.

**July** Rebel leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes while waiting to be tried for war crimes.

**2004 February** Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants officially completed.

**2004 March** UN-backed war crimes tribunal opened a courthouse to try senior militia leaders from both sides of civil war.

Sources [1a](p. 968-974)[1b](p. 3658-3671)[7i]

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## **ANNEX B: Political Organisations**

**APC** (All People's Congress) The governing party from 1968. It was the sole legal party from 1978 until 1991 and merged with the DPP in March 1992. It was reconstituted in 1995 and was led by Edward Turay. The APC came second in the May 2002 an election received 22.35%, and has 27 seats of the seats in parliament. The APC leader Ernest Bai Koroma was its presidential candidate.

**AFRC** (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council) A military organisation headed by Major Johnny Paul Koroma. Removed President Kabbah's government in a coup on 25 May 1997. Joined forces with the RUF. The AFRC has now been dissolved.

**CDF** (Civil Defence Force) A local defence force organised to resist RUF. The most significant grouping in the CDF is known as Kamajors (traditional hunters). They are allied to the Sierra Leonean government.

**ECOMOG** (ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group) Nigerian led West African peacekeeping force. ECOMOG withdrew in May 2000.

**ECOWAS** (Economic Community of West African States)  
An intergovernmental organisation of West African states with headquarters in Nigeria whose aim is to promote economic development and regional co-operation.

**NPRC** (National Provisional Ruling Council) Established by Captain Valentine Strasser who seized power in a military coup in April 1992. It comprised 18 military officers and 4 civilians. The NPRC suspended the Constitution, dissolved the House of Representatives and imposed a state of emergency and curfew. All political activity was suspended and in July 1992 it formed the supreme council of state. It also imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship. In January 1996 Maada Bio, who officially relinquished power to Kabbah's civilian government on 29 March 1996, replaced Strasser.

**PDP** (People's Democratic Party) Led by Osman Kamara. Supported the SLPP in the May 2002 elections.

**PLP** (Peace and Liberation Party, alternative name People's Liberation Party) Founded in 2002, and led by John Paul Koroma, who was also the PLP's presidential candidate in the May 2002 elections. He came third, with 3% of the votes cast. The party has 2 seats in the present Sierra Leone Parliament.

**RUF** (Revolutionary United Front) Joined forces with National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and commenced insurgency in 1991. Remained in conflict with the government despite cease-fires. RUF 's Leader Foday Sankoh was replaced in August 2000 by Gen. Issa Sesay as interim leader. He is also the leader of the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF), which is RUF's political party. The RUF fielded both a presidential candidate and

parliamentary candidates in the May 2002 elections. Their presidential candidate, RUFP's General Secretary Pallo Bangura, received 1.7% of the votes cast. In the parliamentary elections, the RUFP won no seats.

**SLPP** (Sierra Leone People's Party) Led initially by Dr. (later Sir) Milton Margai. It remained the governing party until 1967 and was then the official opposition party from 1968 to 1978. It emerged as the largest party in Parliament following elections in February 1996. Led by President Kabbah. The SLPP obtained 83 seats in the May 2002 election. President Kabbah was re-elected with 70.06% of the votes cast.

**UNPP** (United National People's Party) Led by John Karefa-Smart. Obtained 17 seats in February 1996 elections.

**UNAMSIL** (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) An international peace keeping force deployed to Sierra Leone, and mandated by the UN Security Council.

Sources [1a](p. 968-974, 983-984, 1321)[1b](p. 3658-3671)[4](p.408-409)[7e]

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## **ANNEX C: Prominent People**

### **BOCKARIE Sam**

Known as “Mosquito”, was a prominent member of the RUF, subordinate only to Foday Sankoh. After the end of the civil conflict, he fled to Liberia where he allegedly fought for Charles Taylor. The Liberian Government announced his death on May 2003, and a body alleged to be his was returned to Sierra Leone in June 2003.

### **KABBAH Ahmed Tejan**

Leader of the SLPP and elected president in March 1996. Overthrown by a military coup on 25 May 1997. Re-instated March 1998. He was re-elected President in May 2002.

### **KOROMA Johnny Paul**

He was the Leader of the AFRC, the military junta that deposed the civilian government of President Kabbah. He went into hiding after being linked to an attempted attack on an army camp in January 2003. There is an outstanding Special Court indictment against him.

### **MARGAI Albert**

Milton Margai's half-brother. Minister of Finance until he became Prime Minister in 1964 upon his half brother's death.

### **MARGAI Milton**

Leader of the SLPP he became Chief Minister in 1953 and Prime Minister in 1958. Under his leadership Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 27 April 1961.

### **NORMAN Sam Hinga**

Co-ordinator of the CDF, the main indigenous force, that supported the government during the period of civil conflict. He served in the first Kabbah government from 1996 until May 2002. Following the 14 May 2002 elections, he was made Minister of Internal Affairs in the second Kabbah government. He has been removed from his post, and is currently under arrest, awaiting trial by the Special Court. George Banda Thomas has replaced him in his post, and is acting Minister of Internal Affairs.

### **SANKOH Foday**

Leader of the RUF until he was replaced by Gen. Issa Sesay as interim leader in August 2000. In July 2003 he died of natural causes while in custody awaiting trial.

### **SESAY Gen. Issa**

Interim leader of RUF since August 2000, and is also leader of the RUF. He is currently under arrest, awaiting trial by the Special Court.

**STEVENS Siaka**

Former leader of the APC who won the general elections of March 1967 but was prevented from taking power until April 1968. Dr. Stevens became executive President when Sierra Leone became a republic in April 1971. He remained president until 1985.

**STRASSER Valentine E.M.**

The leader of the coup which seized power on 29 April 1992. As head of state and chairman of the NPRC, he suspended all political activity; suspended the Constitution; dissolved the House of Representatives and imposed a state of emergency. In July 1992 Strasser's regime introduced severe restrictions on the media. He was deposed in a bloodless coup in January 1996.

Sources [1a](p. 968-983)[1b](p. 3658-3671)[2c](p.4)[5i](p.1-2)[7g](p.1-2) [7h]

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